Serving Anson, Guilford, Harnett, Hoke, Lee, Montgomery, Moore, Randolph and Richmond counties in central North Carolina
ABOUT SANDHILLS CENTER

Sandhills Center manages public mental health, intellectual/developmental disabilities and substance abuse services in Anson, Guilford, Harnett, Hoke, Lee, Montgomery, Moore, Randolph and Richmond counties in central North Carolina.

As a publicly-funded Local Management Entity-Managed Care Organization (LME-MCO), Sandhills Center does not provide services directly, but acts as an agent of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to manage a network of contracted private providers.

We partner with individuals, family members, service providers, policy makers and other community stakeholders to create, manage and support quality behavioral health services that meet the needs of our communities.

Sandhills Center’s toll-free telephone line can be reached at any hour of the day or night, including weekends and holidays. You can ask questions, talk with a licensed clinician and make appointments with service providers. For more information, call:

1-800-256-2452
OUR REGION

Map courtesy of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, adapted by Sandhills Center.
Sandhills Center is governed by a dedicated Board of Directors that includes representatives from each of the nine counties within our region.

The goal of the Board of Directors is to provide oversight of programs, and ensure that quality of and access to services remains high throughout the region.

Meetings are held monthly. The Board accepts feedback from the public, the Sandhills Center Consumer and Family Advisory Committee (CFAC), various subcommittees, and our community partners.
Feedback has guided us toward planning three new Facility-Based Crisis centers that will allow for treatment of individuals from all of the Sandhills Center counties.

In 2019, we embarked on a number of new initiatives, including updating Crisis Response Plans for all of our communities. The project involved extensive collaboration with local law enforcement. Clearly, it is a team effort that has led us to shape crisis response priorities, strategies and solutions.

Sandhills Center also joined the state’s LME-MCOs and provider groups to promote #CareForNC, a public awareness campaign that concentrates on the successes of the public behavioral health system in North Carolina. Inspirational stories of success are featured as part of the campaign, including two from the Sandhills Center region.

As we look back at 2019, Sandhills Center is proud to have earned national reaccreditation from URAC through May 2022. We also take pride in having hosted numerous events such as a statewide Consumer and Family Advisory Committee (CFAC) meeting, and a full schedule of beneficial provider training programs.

Another source of pride for Sandhills Center continues to be our involvement in Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for police officers, paramedics and a variety of other first responders who often come in contact with individuals in behavioral health crisis through the course of their daily work.

Looking to 2020, we will continue to monitor the status of the transition to Medicaid Managed Care. We are engaged in helping members transition to the new system, or become accustomed to any other potential changes, in a seamless manner when the time comes.

As we embark on the new year, we want to express our sincere gratitude to Sandhills Center members and their families for their enduring trust and support.

We also appreciate our Board of Directors and CFAC for their continued guidance, and we take this opportunity to acknowledge our staff for their commitment to embrace new challenges and help Sandhills Center to successfully realize our goals.

We look forward to continuing our good work in 2020.

Victoria Whitt
Chief Executive Officer
Sandhills Center
ENGAGING AND ENCOURAGING OUR PROVIDER NETWORK

A YEAR OF TRAINING EXCELLENCE

Keeping our network providers up to date on the latest requirements is a priority at a time when North Carolina’s public behavioral health system is experiencing significant change.

In 2019, Sandhills Center addressed a number of contractual responsibilities as part of our overall Provider Training Plan. As we typically do each year, we coordinated instructive quarterly Provider Forums and an annual Provider Orientation program, as well as a continuing education curriculum for professionals. The forums and orientation sessions serve as a foundation for those who are new to the network, and as a refresher for established providers. The programs also allow for improved communication and relationship building opportunities for Sandhills Center and our network.

The forums grant providers opportunities to receive accurate information directly from us. Some of the topics covered during the 2019 forums included:

- External and Quality Programs/Network Operations information regarding access, sanctions and disputes, credentialing and recredentialing, contracts, clinical practice guidelines and network monitoring.
- Care Coordination information applicable to the housing plan, Medicaid B3 services and the North Carolina Innovations Waiver for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Sandhills Center ensures that the training topics furnished to providers offer the technical assistance they need. Targeted training plans are developed from multiple internal and external sources. The plans are flexible, and often are adapted to address current and emerging needs. In 2019, providers participated in training that include a variety of subjects, such as Clinical Supervision, Ethics, Cultural Competency, Person-Centered Thinking, Trauma and Social Determinants of Health.

In total for 2019, Sandhills Center held 53 training sessions with 1,804 attendees.

In November 2019, we hosted a special six-hour workshop that demonstrated a strong commitment to all Sandhills Center members, including those with diverse cultural backgrounds, and those who have limited English proficiency.

(continued on page 7)
The workshop was entitled, “Clinical Considerations in Working with Latino/a/x Populations.” The training focused on state demographic information, ethical practices, key Latinx cultural values and how they affect Latinx families and treatment. Other topics included immigration, discrimination, changing family dynamics, language use, how mental health is manifested in Latinx communities, and the use of translators.

Dr. Gabriela Livas Stein, a psychologist and associate professor of clinical psychology at UNC-Greensboro, conducted the training. She is highly regarded for her work in the provision of therapeutic services to Latinx families.

The need for this type of training was identified during the 2019 Community Needs Assessment Survey of Sandhills Center members, providers and stakeholders. There are five counties within our region where the Latinx or Hispanic population is above the estimated North Carolina average. Sandhills Center will continually address the needs of individuals and families who are served in our region, and will look at ways in which we can bring additional culturally-relevant curricula to our staff and providers.

SANDHILLS CENTER SCORES HIGHEST IN PROVIDER SATISFACTION

In 2019, for the third straight year, Sandhills Center scored highest among all seven of North Carolina’s LME-MCOs on a variety of measures, according to a network provider survey conducted by NCDHHS.

Sandhills Center earned the highest scores on 16 of the 23 survey questions, and we were the only LME-MCO to have more than four questions scored at the top among our peers. We earned a 92.2 percent score for overall satisfaction, which is the highest score of all North Carolina LME-MCOs.

Sandhills Center also excelled in a variety of other areas including:
- Accessibility of accurate and timely information and referrals.
- Response time for provider needs.
- High-quality network provider training.
- Authorizations and claims processing.
- Offering a clear appeals process.
In 2019, substantial progress was made to bring Facility-Based Crisis Services to the region in Randolph, Richmond and Guilford counties. Construction and renovation for three Facility-Based Crisis centers has been made possible thanks to state and local funding, and Sandhills Center’s pledge to reinvest savings into services.

In Randolph County, renovations at the 110 W. Walker Ave. site in Asheboro are nearing completion. Network provider Daymark Recovery Services will offer a 16-bed, nonmedical unit as an alternative to hospitalization for individuals who experience behavioral health crises. It also will have an observation unit for people to be treated and assessed for up to 23 hours. In addition to walk-in crisis services, outpatient services and medication management will be on site.

In Richmond County, we benefitted from a $1 million state grant that was awarded in 2018 to purchase land and begin construction on a new Facility-Based Crisis center for children and adolescents. In 2019, there was significant momentum in the construction process. The center is scheduled to open in 2020, and will provide a 23-hour observation unit, 16 beds, outpatient services and medication management.

In October 2019, Guilford County government and Cone Health broke ground on an adult Facility-Based Crisis center in Greensboro, where Sandhills Center is planning an adjacent Facility-Based Crisis center for children and adolescents. The partnership between Sandhills Center, Guilford County and Cone Health -- with support from state leaders -- is creating an enhanced level of integrated health services for individuals in crisis that addresses both mental and physical health care needs.

Sandhills Center acknowledges and appreciates that community partnerships factored heavily into the creation of these new Facility-Based Crisis centers.

Left: Current and former members of the Sandhills Center Board of Directors helped Guilford County and Cone Health officials break ground on a new Facility-Based Crisis center for adults in Greensboro. From left to right: Current Board member Dr. Walter Salinger, former member Dixie Branch, current member Gart Evans, Board Vice Chair and Guilford County Commissioner Kay Cashion. The groundbreaking ceremony was held in October 2019. (More photos on page 9).
Above: The future Facility-Based Crisis center for children and adolescents in Richmond County, which is scheduled to open in 2020.

Left: The Facility-Based Crisis center in Randolph County is located on the upper floor of a newly-renovated building at 110 W. Walker Ave., Asheboro. It also is expected to open in 2020, and will be operated by Daymark Recovery Services, the current contracted provider for outpatient and crisis walk-in services at the site.
PARTNERSHIPS HELPING TO REACH GOALS

All nine counties in the Sandhills Center catchment area are expected to benefit from new Crisis Response Plans that were created in 2019.

We are pleased to have collaborated with area sheriff’s offices, healthcare providers and magistrates, among others, to develop Community Crisis Service Plans that are specific to each county’s available resources and needs.

Crisis service plans focus on:
- Access to care.
- Pre-examination assessments.
- Sites for the first examinations and health screenings.
- Transportation to treatment facilities.
- Training for law enforcement agencies or any person providing alternative transportation.

The goal of implementing crisis plans is to redirect individuals who are experiencing crises away from hospital emergency departments so that they can get appropriate treatment, whenever possible, with local behavioral healthcare providers. The crisis plans went into effect Oct. 1, 2019.

Anson, Montgomery, Moore and Richmond counties have partnered to form a subregion and share a plan. Lee and Harnett counties have paired to form another subregion and plan. Guilford, Hoke and Randolph counties have created their own individual plans. Each county’s sheriff’s office has developed its own specific transportation plan.

We appreciate the relationships we have strengthened with local first responders. Collaborations like these allow Sandhills Center to put plans into action that streamline behavioral health crisis responses.

EXPANDING SERVICES FOR YOUTH

Sandhills Center recently expanded service offerings for youth by contracting with Youth Focus, a network provider that has established a program called HYPE—Helping Youth Pursue Excellence.

Sandhills Center was encouraged to fill this service need by the Guilford County Juvenile Justice Partnership, a local team that reinforces family-centered services for justice-involved youth who have substance abuse and mental health conditions.

HYPE was launched in mid-2019, and Youth Focus also is offering a Substance Abuse Outpatient Program and evidence-based, wraparound services that are specific to youth in Guilford County. For some of the young people, services may include transportation, motivational incentives and family supports.

Sandhills Center is grateful for the Juvenile Justice Partnership’s guidance, and the innovative approaches our providers take to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for youth in their care.

WEBSITE UPDATES

Our comprehensive website -- which can be found at www.SandhillsCenter.org -- offers ample opportunities to get the latest information from us.

Improvements to the website in 2019 included adding a news banner to the mid-section of the home page.

We also added color-coded headlines to each major section so that website users can differentiate information intended for specific audiences, such as providers and consumers. Color coding also is used on the ‘CALENDAR’ pages so that users can quickly distinguish between training targeted to providers, and workshops and support groups that are geared toward families.

Sandhills Center is proud of our efforts to maintain a user-friendly website. We will continue our quest to keep your experience on the site as simple, yet productive, as possible.
CFAC HOSTS STATEWIDE EVENT

Sandhills Center’s Consumer and Family Advisory Committee was honored to host a statewide CFAC meeting in April 2019. Eighty-one CFAC representatives from North Carolina’s seven LME-MCOs gathered in Guilford County to learn more about an assortment of topics including Medicaid Transformation.

Speakers for the event included: Leann Henkel, chairperson of the Sandhills Center CFAC and a member of the Board of Directors; State CFAC Chairperson Benita Purcell; and Victoria Whitt, CEO of Sandhills Center. Keynote addresses were delivered by: Kathy Nichols, Associate Director of Services and Supports for the NC Department of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services; and Dave Richard, Deputy Secretary for NC Medicaid/DHHS.

Policy issues and DHHS recommendations were discussed in small-group sessions. The agenda also allowed for CFAC members to address barriers and service gaps and other issues, and members advocated for improvements in quality of care.

CFACs represent people and families who receive behavioral health services by ensuring that the development and delivery of services remains responsive to their needs.

Sandhills Center CFAC members expressed confidence that CFAC members from across North Carolina took valuable information back to their communities.

REACCREDITATION EARNED

Sandhills Center recently earned three-year reaccreditation from URAC, the nation’s largest healthcare accrediting organization.

Reaccreditation is in effect from May 1, 2019, through May 1, 2022, and covers three areas:

- **Health Call Center** -- provides clinical triage services to members in a manner that is timely, confidential and includes medically-appropriate care and treatment referral.
- **Health Utilization Management** -- ensures utilization review, follows a process that is clinically sound and respects individuals' and providers’ rights, and operates within reasonable guidelines.
- **Health Network** -- includes key quality benchmarks for network management, provider credentialing, quality management and improvement, and consumer protection. URAC standards require health networks to establish self-monitoring practices, emphasizing quality assurance and improvement.

URAC is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes healthcare quality, innovation and evidence-based measures. URAC standards promote industry best practices and place emphasis on continuous improvement and consumer empowerment.

(continued on page 12)
Sandhills Center first earned accreditation from URAC on May 1, 2010, and previously earned reaccreditation in 2013 and 2016. Earning reaccreditation again in 2019 validates Sandhills Center’s commitment to accountability, compliance and nationally-recognized standards.

“By achieving this status, once again, we continue to demonstrate a comprehensive commitment to quality care, improved processes and better outcomes for the individuals and families who receive services,” stated Victoria Whitt, CEO of Sandhills Center. “We are proud of this accomplishment.”

SANDHILLS CENTER PROMOTES #CAREFORNC

Sandhills Center joined a statewide public awareness campaign, aptly named #CareForNC. The campaign is an effort established in 2019 by the Partnership for Community Well-Being, which consists of all LME-MCOs and two large provider groups.

Since June 2019, #CareForNC has raised awareness on behalf of the countless people whose lives have been changed and communities that have been strengthened by the services available through the public system of care. North Carolina has pioneered a community-based managed care system that puts people first, and delivers the right services, in the right amount, at the right time.

Sandhills Center participated in the development of the #CareForNC brand identity, website, and social media and news content. We also were involved in gathering data that serves as a testament to the tangible impact LME-MCOs and providers make in the lives of individuals and their families in all 100 North Carolina counties.

The #CareForNC website also contains content that is specific to our region. That includes ways in which Sandhills Center is reinvesting its savings into services and initiatives, such as Crisis Intervention Team training for first responders.

Sandhills Center is particularly excited about two short videos that were produced to highlight individual successes in our region. Featured are the chairperson of our CFAC, an individual who has received Sandhills Center services, and the CEO of one of our largest providers.

Sandhills Center offers thanks to those who participated in the video productions. We know that their personal stories serve as an inspiration to the greater community, and especially to people who are seeking treatment or care.

More information can be found online at --
www.CareForNC.org
You may also interact on social media by visiting --
www.facebook.com/CareforNC/
or
www.twitter.com/carefornc
CIT THRIVES IN THE SANDHILLS CENTER REGION

For 11 years, Sandhills Center has cosponsored Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for first responders in the region.

In 2019, CIT classes were held at least once in each of the Sandhills Center counties.

Participating in 2019 classes were 130 sworn officers, 15 telecommunicators, 26 emergency medical services (EMS) personnel, five NC Department of Public Safety officers, and one firefighter. Included among the sworn officers were campus police, airport security and school resource officers. In total for the year, Sandhills Center coordinated 14 classes and graduated 177 participants who represented 36 departments and agencies.

CIT is a national program that seeks to prevent arrest and incarceration for "nuisance" or misdemeanor crimes, and to connect people with treatment resources instead of trips to hospital emergency departments. Sandhills Center and our community partners strive to give first responders tools and resources so they can effectively interact with people who have mental illness, their families and providers.

CIT is a rigorous 40-hour program (32 hours for EMS personnel) that is taught by subject-matter experts. In addition to classroom training, first responders also participate in simulation and role-playing activities, and engage in meaningful conversations with community residents who have lived experience. CIT in the Sandhills Center region is cosponsored by local community colleges and NAMI chapters, as well as various law enforcement agencies and network providers. CIT in Randolph County is coordinated exclusively through Randolph Community College with assistance from Sandhills Center.

To learn more about CIT in the Sandhills Center region and our graduates, search ‘Crisis Intervention Team Training’ on our website -- www.SandhillsCenter.org.
Administrative Offices

P.O. Box 9
West End, NC  27376

24/7 CALL CENTER
1-800-256-2452

www.SandhillsCenter.org

For free and confidential behavioral health screenings, visit: www.SandhillsCenterAccess2Care.org

Sandhills Center is fully accredited by URAC in the areas of Health Network, Health Call Center and Health Utilization Management, which ensures that our members receive high-quality service. We make sure that you receive the attention and care you deserve while protecting your privacy.